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DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS
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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: EASTERN LTTE POLITICAL LEADER KILLED

Classified By: James F. Entwistle, Deputy Chief of Mission. 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary. On February 7, E. Kausalyan, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Political Leader for the eastern districts of Batticaloa and Ampara, was killed in an ambush in a Government of Sri Lanka (GSL)-controlled area while driving to Batticaloa from LTTE-controlled territory in the north. Four or five others, including a pro-LTTE former Tamil MP, were killed in the same attack, while four other passengers were injured. Pro-LTTE sources and media outlets blamed paramilitary operatives working with the Sri Lankan armed forces for the attack; however, the LTTE did not file a ceasefire violation complaint with the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM). Most interlocutors do not think the attack will precipitate a break in the nearly three year-old truce between the GSL and the LTTE, but do expect retribution, probably in the form of revenge killings. The incident may complicate post-tsunami cooperation between the GSL and LTTE.
End Summary.

Ambush on "Lonely" Road Kills LTTE Political Leader

12. (C) On February 7, E. Kausalyan, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Political Leader for the eastern districts of Batticaloa and Ampara, was killed in an ambush while driving from LTTE-controlled territory in the north to Batticaloa. According to Neville Wijesinghe, Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) for the Eastern Range, and Sri Lanka Army (SLA) spokesman Brigadier General Daya Ratnayake, the van was carrying 10 passengers, including Kausalyan; several other LTTE cadres (both political and military); former Ampara Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) MP Arianayagam Chandranehru; two police officers on protective detail for Chandranehru; Chandranehru's civilian bodyguard; and the driver of the van. At least four of Kausalyan's traveling companions, including the former MP, were killed in the attack. DIG Wijesinghe told poloff that the van was attacked by gunfire at approximately 8:00 pm on February 7 near a Sinhalese village about three miles from the border of the Batticaloa District. Some press reports claimed that another car blocked the van in the road and forced it to stop, at which point the van was ambushed and fired upon.

13. (C) Joseph Pararajasingham, a pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP from Batticaloa, told poloff that Kausalyan, who reported to LTTE Political Leader S.P. Tamilchelvan, was returning from a tsunami relief planning

meeting with Tamilchelvan at LTTE headquarters in the northern district of Kilinochchi. (Note: Apparently the former MP had not been at the Kilinochchi meeting. Instead, Kausalyan and his fellow Tigers joined Chandranehru, whom Pararajasingham described as "doing political work for the LTTE" after his unsuccessful re-election bid in April 2004, at some point en route to Batticaloa.) According to Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) Spokeswoman Helen Olafs-Dottir, the remaining four injured passengers were transferred to hospitals in Colombo. There is no indication that any of the attackers were killed, despite some press reports of crossfire. Olafs-Dottir noted that LTTE cadres are not allowed to have weapons in Government-controlled areas and surmised that the source of any crossfire might have been the weapons of the two police officers accompanying former TULF MP Chandranehru.

¶4. (C) Although no one has claimed responsibility for the attack, it is widely assumed that members of a dissident LTTE faction, loyal to former LTTE eastern military leader Karuna, may be behind the killings. Several sources asserted that the slain LTTE cadres, knowing the potential risk in the area, should have requested security for the journey. Brigadier General Ratnayake told poloff that the SLA had warned the LTTE of possible threats from the Karuna faction and therefore had offered Tiger cadres security when they traveled in the east. DIG Wijesinghe noted that camps of Karuna's cadres remain in the vicinity, adding that some local Sinhala villagers take money to shelter Karuna sympathizers. The SLMM's Olafs-Dottir told poloff that Kausalyan and other LTTE political cadres, unlike their military counterparts, typically did not request security. Pro-LTTE TNA MP Pararajasingham suggested that the LTTE had erred in not requesting security from the SLMM or the SLA, and surmised that the LTTE must "have relaxed" after the tsunami.

LTTE Blames SLA

¶5. (C) Pro-LTTE website TamilNet posted news of the attack immediately and reported that the LTTE "blamed paramilitary operatives working with the Sri Lankan armed forces for the attack." An international reporter told poloff that she had spoken to LTTE spokesman Dayamaster, who alleged that a military-supported group aligned with the Karuna faction was responsible for the attack on the LTTE. Nonetheless, the Tiger spokesman said the LTTE would respect the ceasefire, which the reporter described as "standard LTTE language." Dayamaster had also suggested that LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran might make a statement about the killings on February 8.

¶6. (C) TNA MP Pararajasingham told poloff that he had "every suspicion that military intelligence had a hand in the killings." Pararajasingham noted that the attack took place in a "lonely" Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) -controlled area, about one-half kilometer away from an SLA camp. (Note: LTTE and TNA representatives frequently cite the proximity of SLA camps to sites where LTTE have been killed as evidence of SLA involvement. According to DIG Wijesinghe, there are two or three SLA divisions stationed nearby. End note.) SLMM Spokeswoman Olafs-Dottir told poloff that, despite TamilNet's accusation that Sri Lankan armed forces were involved in this most recent incident, the Tigers had not filed an official ceasefire violation against the SLA, and the SLMM does not expect they will.

Implications for the Ceasefire

¶7. (U) Although the December 26 tsunami may have dampened the internecine warfare between the two LTTE factions for a time, in recent weeks the killings have resumed. On January

31, according to press reports, suspected LTTE cadre Rienzie Benedict was killed in Negombo, north of Colombo. On February 4, pro-LTTE TamilNet reported that S. Thevathas, an LTTE official in charge of forest conservation in his area, was killed near Batticaloa. There may also have been more killings in LTTE-controlled areas, but these are rarely reported in the press.

18. (C) Most interlocutors do not think the attack will precipitate a break in the nearly three year-old truce between the GSL and the LTTE. Ketesh Loganathan, a Director at Centre for Policy Alternatives, a prominent local think-tank, told poloff that the LTTE is likely to retaliate quickly, but will be unwilling to concede publicly that Karuna's cadres were responsible for the attack on the LTTE's most prominent eastern leader. Loganathan explained that the killing was a "hard reminder" that the "Wanni" Tigers, who are based in the north, are not in control of the east, and "this killing makes it clear."

19. (C) The LTTE may comment yet. In the next few days, the obligatory high-profile LTTE funerals will offer the Tigers the opportunity to propagate their version of the attack to their supporters and the media. When asked if he would attend Kausalyan's funeral, TNA MP Pararajasingham told poloff he was undecided about his attendance, and noted, "I have security concerns of my own." In the meantime, the Tigers have called a hartal, or general strike, on February 9 from Trincomalee all the way down the eastern coast to Pottuvil (south of Ampara) to protest the killings.

Comment

10. (C) This event marks the first high-level killing of an LTTE member since June. While we agree with interlocutors that this incident will not break the ceasefire, the killings are nonetheless a direct challenge to LTTE claims to control the East--a challenge the LTTE leadership cannot afford to ignore. Before the tsunami, many observers believed the LTTE slowly was re-establishing control in the fractious east. Since then, however, the dissident Karuna faction may have capitalized on post-disaster confusion to reorganize and regroup itself in this troubled district. The LTTE has long alleged GSL complicity in Karuna's defection--a charge the Government has been hard put to refute convincingly. While there is no direct evidence of a GSL hand in this latest incident, its proximity to SLA installations can only inflame LTTE suspicions at a time when the Government is publicly seeking the Tigers' cooperation in reconstruction efforts.

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